

around about half the island at an altitude of about 50 feet. The mangroves are on the north-east, north and north-west portions of the island.

1103 hours: Bound for Denham.

1125 hours: Our position is Lat. 25° 43' s. (about 14 nautical miles south of Cape Levillain) on the east coast of Dirk Hartogs Island after a flight from Denham. We are now about to fly southwards along the east coast of Dirk Hartogs Island for an inspection of the cormorant population. At the present position there are 200 cormorants.

The cormorants roosting at about 7 to 8 miles north of Quoin Bluff were photographed. There were obviously some thousands of birds present, probably 7,000 to 10,000 birds. They showed little inclination to leave the roosts but eventually about 1,500 flew on to the nearby water. There were only about 50 cormorants at the Quoin Bluff. . . . There were only about 100 Crested Terns and Silver Gulls on Egg or Tetrodon Island.

1145 hours: Wind S.E. about 15-20 miles an hour. Sky clear. Crossed South Passage to Sharks Bay to the open sea.

UNUSUAL NESTING SITE FOR A COLONY OF CRESTED TERNS

By H. O. WEBSTER, Government School, Rosa Brook.

On December 21, 1946, I was visiting Hamelin Bay, near Karridale, Western Australia and on going down to the beach, I noticed numbers of terns flying back and forth from the broken part of the old jetty. The terns were Crested Terns (*Sterna bergii*) and appeared to be in considerable numbers. I had often seen these birds in this locality before but only in small numbers, so that my curiosity was aroused. At the first opportunity I went out to see what the unusual activity was about.

I found that a nesting colony had been established there, actually on the old jetty, since my last visit in January, 1946. To my certain knowledge Crested Terns had not nested there in the previous nine years, probably never before in the same place. The jetty is over forty years old and was built so that timber cut at the several mills near Karridale in those days, could be shipped overseas. It is gradually falling to pieces from old age, disuse and neglect, only two sections of any size remaining. The first of these sections extends from the shore westwards some fifty yards. There is then a gap of about thirty yards. The second part then continues for approximately one hundred yards out to sea. This section thus forms a sort of wooden island, one hundred yards long and twenty yards wide. As may be seen in the accompanying photograph, the decking timbers lie about in confusion while the beams and piles are much decayed.

The only means of reaching the colony was by rowing boat, so on the first suitable day I spent some hours with the birds. It was a most interesting experience and I quickly realised how deafening the noise in a large colony of birds must be. I made

a careful count of the young birds and eggs, my total being 214. Birds were nesting in every hollow of the rotting timbers, eggs being strewn everywhere in all stages of incubation, some of them very dark in colour. Many of the young birds were fairly large, but none had any feathers developed, all were in down.



Crested Terns nesting on ruined jetty, Hamelin Bay.

The terns continued to lay eggs during my stay of some weeks at Hamelin Bay. Silver Gulls (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) occasionally visited the colony but were quickly driven off by the terns before they could steal any eggs. No other predators were seen and none of the campers interfered with the colony except myself when I visited it to observe and take photographs. Unfortunately I was not able to undertake very detailed observations of the activities of the nesting birds but managed to assemble some notes which may be of interest or value. A single Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) roosted with the Crested Terns at night and was not molested by the nesting birds. It was evidently one of those remaining from the phenomenal invasion following the storm of the previous month.

As the young birds developed they became very restless and wandered about, up and down the beams and planking. This naturally proved a most hazardous practice. They were continually falling into the water some eight to ten feet below. It was quite impossible for these unfortunates to return to the top of the jetty without human assistance, and indeed I rescued five or six. I saw

one very young bird fall in one day and could not rescue it as the boat was away. This bird drowned in about five minutes after a gallant struggle. The heads of young birds are too heavy for the undeveloped muscles of the neck, with the result that the beak and nostrils cannot be held out of the water for more than ten or twenty seconds. The inevitable result was not long delayed in very young birds but when they are older they swim readily and find no difficulty in keeping the nostrils well clear of the water.

These older birds could not return to the top of the jetty, so they were forced to make for the beach. I watched one bird make a landing. There was only a tiny surf running and the young bird was tumbled over and over a number of times but finally righted itself to struggle up the beach. The parent birds were hovering about, making a great fuss. On the beach other dangers quickly made themselves evident. Campers were eager to catch the young birds in order to examine them but usually let them go as soon as their curiosity was satisfied. One boy was going to keep a bird for a pet, but I persuaded him to let it go. One day a dog made his appearance and succeeded in mauling one young bird's wing so that it would never fly. Most birds made for the sea when disturbed and swam out to safety. I think that very few of the young in this colony reached maturity. However this is only an impression of mine since many may have reached Hamelin Island which is about half a mile from the jetty. Once there they would be comparatively safe.

The most puzzling thing about the establishment of the colony is, to me, why the terns came to select such a spot. There is a large rock named Peak Islet a few hundred yards from the jetty; also Hamelin Island is some acres in extent, and some miles to the south there are several low rocky islands that seem to be very suitable for a nesting site. I believe one of these islands is used for nesting by sea birds, but cannot state the species.

The Crested Terns nested on the jetty again in 1947 and I saw them during a visit to Hamelin Bay in late December. I did not have an opportunity of inspecting the nesting site but from information given me by local fishermen there were only a few young remaining and merely several eggs, so that the terns must have commenced activities rather earlier than last year. The number of adult birds appeared to be the same as in 1946. It was also interesting to find that the Sooty Tern was again there—roosting at night with the other terns. It has a very noticeable cry—perhaps similar to a cat is the nearest description I can give.

ABNORMAL NESTS AND EGGS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

By F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury

As a schoolboy in England I was always greatly interested in the ways and methods of birds at the nesting period. Every spring Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) and Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) were closely watched as they were always the first to com-